



## Administrative Office of the Courts

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**Joseph E. Lambert**  
Chief Justice

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Kentucky was well represented at the second annual Congressional Conference on Civic Education in Washington, D.C. Among those attending from the Commonwealth were, from left, Natalie Stiglitz from the Office of Education, Development and Placement at the University of Louisville; Sen. Jack Westwood, R-Erlanger; Secretary of State Trey Grayson; and Deborah Williamson, Ph.D., grant specialist for the Administrative Office of the Courts. Not pictured are Chief Justice Joseph E. Lambert and Rep. Tanya Pullin, D-South Shore.

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*For Immediate Release*

### Kentucky court system leading national efforts to enhance civic education *Chief Justice Lambert supports initiatives on civic involvement*

FRANKFORT, Ky., March 30, 2005 — Motivating young Kentuckians to get involved in civic matters is the goal of Chief Justice Joseph E. Lambert and other members of the Judicial Branch of Kentucky government.

In fact, chief justices from across the country adopted a resolution calling “upon each state to reinvigorate civic education in schools” at a Jan. 26 meeting of the Public Trust and Confidence in the Judiciary Committee at the Conference of Chief Justices in New York City.

“It is my hope that by shining a spotlight on this important issue, court systems in each state will take the time to work with legislators and educators to strengthen civic education,” said Chief Justice Lambert.

#### **First Summit on Civic Literacy**

This collaborative effort has already begun in Kentucky, where all three branches of state government have joined to promote civic education. Their efforts kicked off in October 2004 when the first statewide Summit on Civic Literacy was hosted in conjunction with the Scripps Howard Center for Civic Literacy at Northern Kentucky University. Nearly 200 educators, community leaders, legislators and government officials were on hand to launch a multi-year effort to examine the state of civic literacy among Kentucky youth. The catalyst for the summit was Senate Joint Resolution 80, authored by Sen. Jack Westwood of Erlanger and one of only three such legislative actions nationally. The second summit is slated for Oct. 5-6, 2005.

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### **Annual Congressional Conference on Civic Education**

Kentucky's role in the national initiative to improve civic education took Chief Justice Lambert to the second annual Congressional Conference on Civic Education in Washington, D.C., in December 2004. More than 350 state legislators, education leaders and officials from throughout the country reconvened to report on a year of progress and continue to map out strategies for improving civic education in America's schools and communities.

Kentuckians who joined Chief Justice Lambert at the conference included Sen. Westwood; Rep. Tanya Pullin, D-South Shore; Secretary of State Trey Grayson; Natalie Stiglitz, coordinator for the Office of Education, Development and Placement at the University of Louisville; and Deborah Williamson, Ph.D., grant specialist for the Administrative Office of the Courts (AOC) and state facilitator for the Congressional Conference.

The delegates spent the three-day conference on efforts to increase the teaching of civics and change state education requirements. They also addressed concerns about civic knowledge and engagement among young people, as well as the decline in the teaching of civics in American classrooms.

"Since last year's Congressional Conference, every state has some type of campaign under way," said Williamson of the AOC. "It's exciting that Kentucky and Florida are two of the most active court systems in the field of civic and law-related education. While the efforts differ by state, all states focus on making civic education a core subject in schools, establishing standards and curricular requirements, and improving teacher education and professional development."

Williamson said that Kentucky's specific initiatives include hosting regional summits to assess civic education and engagement statewide, providing professional development for educators, analyzing data on civic ed activities, and reporting to the General Assembly, starting with the 2005 session.

The Congressional Conference and state campaigns are acting upon recommendations in the landmark report, *The Civic Mission of Schools*, a joint project of the Center for Information & Research on Civic Learning & Engagement and the Carnegie Corporation of New York. The U.S. Department of Education funded the Congressional Conference.

### **2005 Kentucky General Assembly Supports Civic Ed**

Rep. Pullin sponsored House Joint Resolution 109, which Gov. Fletcher signed March 18 to designate October as Civic Literacy Month in Kentucky. Rep. Pullin also sponsored House Resolution 87, which passed the House by a 95-0 vote March 8. HR 87 specifies that Kentucky's Congressional Conference participants should continue to promote civic education through statewide evaluation, explore best practices in civic ed and engagement, convene a second summit, and adhere to recommendations in the *Rediscovering Democracy* report, which was presented to the General Assembly by Secretary of State Grayson and colleagues.

"Secretary of State Grayson was a strong supporter of the recent legislation," said Williamson. "We appreciate his passion for civic ed and his willingness to devote so much time to the statewide campaign. He resonates with young people from all walks of life and, in large measure, this project is about reaching out to youth who are disengaged from political processes." Greyson serves as chair of the Kentucky Workgroup on Civic Education.

The Administrative Office of the Courts is the operational arm of the Kentucky Court of Justice and supports the activities of more than 3,400 court system employees, including elected justices, judges and circuit court clerks. The AOC also carries out numerous law-related education programs for students throughout Kentucky. ####